James Matthew Wilson

The Scar of Odysseus

In the old stories, on a quest
For a lost grail, gold fleece, or to refound
A kingdom sacked so the hearth gods can rest,
A small crew would leave its natal ground
And sail beyond the limits of the West.

The sons and wives who stayed behind
Would wonder at their wandering and wait
With thoughts of monsters weighing on their mind,
Until a ship with magical freight
Appears at dawn, its white sail on dark brine.

Such tales can hardly fail to please.
For, we lap up the unknown that's made known,
And sense our lives, in great or small degrees,
Look like quests too—could they be shown
In all their menaces and victories.

No wonder, then, we celebrate
The bliss of bride and groom at their beginning;
The perilous hours that lead through narrow straits
But somehow keep the fates' spool spinning;
The disembarking for a golden estate.

What's more, we see a dark plot swells
Along the path the schoolboy walks alone;
And hear behind the girl's first kiss church bells;
And feel our hearts with his atone,
When the bond clerk comes clean on what he sells.

Their lives show ours. When we behold
Some soldier stiffly called away to war,
Or hear monks pray their office in the cold
Chapel, we know that their forms are
Those our lives take when their true depths are told.

But they must *not* be: we have seen
The maniac proclaim his destiny,
And suffered through dull cruise slides, scene on scene,
As some fool reeled in vanity.
We cannot always say what our lives mean.

Not just the humble, but the wise,
Accept the distant idyll for its strangeness,
Which gives to our lives' plots their just disguise.
Odysseus wore a beggar's plainness
So that the truth his love alone surmised.

How Many Exiles in the Monasteries

> *A man does not join himself with the Universe*
> *so long as he has anything else to join himself with.*
> —*T.S. Eliot*

How many exiles in the monasteries
  Copied some painted page in heavy tomes
And filled its margins with the spry but weary
  Details recalled of their forsaken homes?

Some displaced readers down the centuries
  Have opened Dante's *De vulgari* and found
Their pains ginned up as pride's rhetorical breeze:
  Pure language is the great man's native ground.

When, over cheap newspaper blurbs, one sees
  A plane's white snout shredding the parceled sky—
A discount angel's posed sublimity
  That loathes outmoded bones—one feels its lie:

The placeless freedom some words have is not
Ours; they're what's left when our homes go to rot.

All the Hollowed Shells

in Cahirciveen

We found a thousand hollow shells left scattered
Among the rocky, kelp-strewn teeth of shore:
Such seeping, tight-lipped, stubborn hunks of matter,
Tossed up by chance and left as dried decor
For tourists like myself to stow away
In pockets, as a keep-sake of their day.

Behind me, crumbling stones from a house wall—
Whose denizens died old and childless,
The cattle staring listless from their stalls—
Lie, too, as if with nothing to confess.
Here, among sand and stone and history,
Lay broken shells from whom integrity

And fullness have been crushed so that their shards
Grow iridescent in the tide and sun;
Though life is weak, it hostels in what's hard.
I notice all this as I pick up one,
Its slow, un-minded growth preserved as rings
Of calcite, unconcerned with what time brings.

Others have thought that they could take shells for
Their beauty, worn by wind and waters, stripped
Of life and freed completely of those scores
From beaks or cracking stones. Their silent lips,
As pale as the pearls sealed within, have chimed
On ends of strings, been found in strangers' rhymes.

A dozen times—I have lost count—I've turned
To this or that girl on my arm to call
Her the proverbial pearl—that is, the firm
And definite prize to whom I am in thrall,
As if all thought and purpose came from her
Whose face will be, in six months' time, a blur.

But this one with me now will surely last,
I tell myself, and turn to her in pride
At her slim waist, the fullness of her breasts,
The mark, like coffee pooled on her knee's side.
At night, she reads our travel guide aloud,
While I imagine us amid a crowd

Of pilgrims scrambling up some rubbled hill
Or listening as a street player tunes her harp.
She does this hoping each sight will distil
In memory, meaning and details kept sharp.
So would I hold her voice and form in thought,
Though I sensed a break coming when we fought

Three nights ago, and she saw that my hands
Were like those of a thief or exile who snags,
On leaving, things he'll never understand
But all the same stuffs in his carpet bag.
All I'd admired in figure, words, and head
Seemed, then, just one more tour site visited

But, here we are, amid a wreck of shells
And houses that, in ruins, seem to tell
More of time's lies and hurt than even they could
When fishermen and their families still worked here.
That wreck and ruin is something understood,
And something that for us is coming near;

Much like the news reports that, years ago,
Troubled this country that it had been blind
To the particular sufferings of its own
For all its principled benevolence of mind,
When here, in Kerry, bodies of drowned souls,
Anonymous infants, were cast up on the shoals.

On the Distinction between Verse and Poetry, a Classical Solution

In his introduction to a 1941 selection of Rudyard Kipling's poems, T.S. Eliot begins by asking "whether Kipling's verse really is poetry" at all.[1] He proceeds to group Kipling with the "many writers of verse who have not aimed at writing poetry." And he concludes by insisting that he makes no "value judgement" between verse and poetry, going so far as to praise Kipling as a master of verse, which art form does some things that poetry itself cannot do. Even so, he insists that good verse must, at least from time to time, rise to the level of poetry.[2] Eliot thus leaves us with the impression that the distinction between verse and poetry is more than mere semantics, but of what that distinction consists remains ambiguous. As a poet and essayist who spent much of his career attempting to restore vital meaning to words and actions that have gone dead, been inured by the exhausting trod of history, Eliot can be forgiven for trying to maintain a distinction that does not seem entirely adequate to the reality it is supposed to describe. But, if Eliot makes this distinction, should we? And if, finally, some distinction holds between poetry and verse, how should we understand it? I shall here propose that verse—meaning, in this essay, poetic lines written in *meter*—interweaves with two other elements, which I group under the rubrics *memory* and *metaphor*, to constitute the essence of that paradigmatic and so august kind of *making* that we call poetry.

Readers of Timothy Steele's magnificent study, *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt against Meter*, will recall that no one would have thought to debate whether verse and poetry might refer to separate things, had not Aristotle's long-lost *Poetics* been recovered during the Renaissance.[3] When our first modern literary critics looked upon this ancient precedent for their vocation, they hit upon the following short passage. Early in the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes,

> The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse—you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one

> describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.[4]

As Steele reports, the effort of Renaissance literary theorists to "harmonize" this passage with the work of other ancient authorities on rhetoric led them to draw a conclusion Aristotle himself seems not to have intended.[5] That verse, meaning here metrical composition, is something other than and even outside the essence of poetry was no part of Aristotle's argument. His *Poetics*, as it comes down to us, is a treatise on dramatic and epic poetry, and Aristotle's aim is to consider the chief qualities these poetic modes share, which is the imitation or re-telling of an action.[6] They are poetry because they tell fictional stories: they have plots drawn together *not* from incidental historical facts but from internally coherent causal relations. It is in the making of plots that the dramatic and epic poet's activity primarily consists. Verse may be essential to these modes and indeed to all poetry, but dividing poetry into types based merely on differences of meter, on verse form, does not by itself suffice to define what drama and epic themselves do.[7] Elsewhere, Aristotle will be content to identify poetry with metrical composition in general, writing that prose "is to be rhythmical, but not metrical," or else it will become verse, by which he seems to mean poetry.[8] Only if we wish to understand the different kinds of poetry relative to one another do we need to pass beyond metrical form to something else—its *kinds* of content (which Aristotle calls the "object") and its different "manners" of presentation.[9]

But Renaissance readers did not perceive the particular distinctions Aristotle was making for the sake of understanding what makes drama and epic the kinds of art forms they are, because those readers were trying to draw his insights into a more generalized, and consequently less subtle, theory about the nature and function of poetry as a whole. Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (1595) offers a classic example of the results. Sidney would propose that all poetry consists in the making of an idealized or "golden" imitation (*mimesis*) that will "teach and delight."[10] He expands Aristotle's definition of imitation to account as best he can for all kinds of poetry and presumes he has adequately defined his object. He then observes that poets have "appareled

their poetical inventions in that numbrous kind of writing which is called verse." What he means by "apparel" becomes clear presently, when he insists that "verse [is] no cause of poetry."[11] Further on he will even say "one may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry."[12]

These are incredible remarks coming from Sidney's pen. His poems were among the first true systematic realizations of modern English accentual-syllabic meter such that his greatest achievement as a poet may well be just his bringing English prosody to a perfection so that it could withstand comparison with the classical quantitative meters of Greek and Latin.[13] Furthermore, Sidney himself conceives of this "apparel" of meter as speech's highest perfection, its fulfillment as it were.[14] And this leads him to suggest, with other Renaissance Platonists and humanists, that a perfection of the surface of speech is the very incarnation of the ideal, such that any distinction between thought and expression, content and form, becomes moot. He collapses content into form and celebrates the poet as what we might call the true philosopher, because he eschews the abstract ruminations typical of all philosophers with the striking exception of Plato, in favor of the realization of ideas as form, truth as meter.[15] Perfection of verse is therefore effectively, if not explicitly, perfection of poetry, and because poetry gives us "a perfect picture" of the truths "the philosopher saith," we may go further and say that, for Sidney, perfection of verse is finally the perfection of philosophy, precisely because it collapses the abstract thoughts of the philosopher into the surface or form of the poetic imitation.[16]

I think this is what the great poet and critic Yvor Winters must have objected to in Sidney when he spoke of his "sensitivity to language" that is "greatly in excess of [his] moral intelligence."[17] Winters subsequently notes that Sidney "introduced a mode of perception too complex for his own powers, and was often forced to seek matter in the precious and the trivial" and that "Sidney is concerned" in his poetry "primarily with what he regards as a graceful manner, a polished surface."[18] It would not have occurred to Winters to entertain a "polished surface" as being itself the truth perceived; he most admired the plain, abstract, and often didactic "native" style of the sixteenth lyrics written before Sidney and others introduced Petrarchan conventions into English. But, yes, indeed, this is what Sidney suavely proclaims. While he will insist that poets cannot be accused of being "liars," because they do not claim to speak the literal truth, his argument

for what poetry *does* speak defines it as a concrete, philosophical, and ideal imitation that *transcends* the mere facts of the literal. In this, as we might expect, he claims to be following Aristotle regarding the difference between poetry and history even as he also shows poetry, again, to be the very perfection of philosophy.[19]

Sidney's concern for poetry as surface—for what he even calls "the skin . . . and beauty"—lies in his sense of it as forming an ideal vision, and this "golden" ideal becomes a philosophical model that the reader is intended to emulate.[20] As Gavin Alexander notes in his edition of the Defense, Sidney's account of imitation follows Aristotle's by placing it at the heart of poetry, but it considerably expands its scope by joining it to the account Cicero gives in *Pro Archia Poeta*.[21] In sum, the matter of poetry is an ideal imitation of reality, and so qualifies as *mimesis*; the reader is meant to *emulate* what he finds in the ideal form of poetry; and, between *mimesis* and emulation falls imitation, that is, a poetic style modeled on the achievement of past masters. The *imitatio* of style becomes the threshold that leads us from the matter *in* the poem *out of it* to the reader. Poetic form seems almost to bear all things within itself as a kind of microcosm; the poet stands second only to the divine among the ranks of men.[22]

Just as Sidney and his contemporaries overlooked the particulars of Aristotle's ideas so as to arrive at a general theory, so later readers would overlook the subtleties of Sidney's. Rather than perceiving his ambition to merge all thought into the medium of poetry so that it may at last find its perfect apparel or embodiment, they fastened on his dogmatic distinction between poetry and verse. We all know what happened next. Verse came to be associated with "craft," "technique," composition, and practice.[23] It is mere form, an empty shell, a dried husk—or at best a convenient container to be smashed as a Greek might smash a plate when the real passions at the party get going. Poetry, on the other hand, came to be a term to be uttered only as one's cheeks warmed with overwhelming emotion and as one's language grew purple or perhaps slurred with some ethereal liquor. For Keats, poesy is indeed the drug that alone makes for the overcoming of our mortal senses so that we may hear the sad music of eternal beauty. For many a romantic, poetry is not a way of writing or speaking, it is rather a way of perceiving. We see into the life of things, writes Wordsworth. More than one hundred years later, a French priest will tell us this is so because poetry is a natural analogue to the supernatural experience of the divine known first

by Christian mystics, and a French philosopher will tell us that poetry constitutes a unique mode of intelligence. It is intuitive knowledge of existence by way of concrete being. Such extraordinary claims have been made for poetry's power that one begins to think, with J.V. Cunningham, that it is not the content of the definition of poetry that any longer matters but only one's fevered endorsement of its almost supernatural moral and spiritual value.[24]

In following this circumstantial cleaving of verse from poetry, we have come a very long way from what Aristotle was attempting to do. He wished merely to understand what the body of poems under study all had in common. No one denies that he was at best only partially successful, but his failure was that his theory did not extend to all the different individual poems for which it was intended to account. Even my students recall ideas of *hubris* and the "fatal flaw" in the tragic hero as if these were universal principles of tragedy, when in fact they do not even account for most of the plays Aristotle had read.[25] But let's credit Aristotle with at least this much. At least his theory was intended to account for actual poems. When one hears the celebration of poetry not as a genre of literature but as a peculiar spirit, experience, or way of knowing, one senses that the word has become untethered from anything in particular. One can almost see the broken twine left swaying beneath the hot air balloon of poetry as it rises, rises, pushes upward on the heat of our many fine sentiments. Even Eliot understood things had gotten out of hand; he just did not know how to correct the matter.[26]

When poetry and verse are distinguished in this line of thinking, it becomes clear that one refers to an actual object—poems—and the other to some activity of a subject—the poet. We are no longer talking about the same things. Those who try—and fail—to follow Sidney portray poetry as a great thing; whatever it may be, it is surely good. Verse seems a term of deprecation. But, if "verse" is such a bad thing, why did those writers who broke with established English metrical practice feel the need to claim that their poetry was experimenting with "free *verse*"? Why not call their stripping away of actual verse something more romantic like "transcendental poetry" or "pure spiritual expression" or who knows what else? Is not verse, after all, for mere journeymen?

There must be something about verse that we recognize as not only good or valuable but as absolutely essential to poetry such that one cannot exist without the other. Those who tear

themselves away from meter, who abandon verse, would seem to bandage over the wound with the gauze of "free verse" and hope that no one will notice. We live in an age of course where people paper over unrealities with pleasing newspeak as a matter of course, and so I guess it testifies to the prophetic powers of true poets that they were already papering over the abandonment of meter with meaningless nominals a hundred years ago.

But a wound is a wound and is bound to ache. Hence the sharpness of Dick Davis's poem "Preferences." If poetry is prophetic transcendental emotional excrescence, Davis wants no part in it. He'll take verse. His full statement reads,

> To my surprise
> I've come to realize
> I don't like poetry
>
> (Dear, drunkly woozy,
> Accommodating floozy
> That she's obliged to be,
>
> Poor girl, these days).
> No, what I love and praise
> Is not damp poetry
>
> But her pert, terse,
> Accomplished sibling: verse,
> She's the right girl for me.[27]

If this is not a poem, but just verse, then why does it sound like a poem? And, why does so much that claims to be poetry though it walks about stripped bare of verse—not?

Well, if poetry and verse are categorically different things, those who like their poetry to be verse and those who do not might just as well go their separate ways. They might, as Davis proposes, simply oblige their own preferences. Yet somehow this pleasingly pluralistic proposal does not work. If one persists in following one's yen for verse, one is still liable to be called backward, reactionary, "narrow-minded," or perhaps even a fascist.[28] Eliot, recall, told us he intended no "value judgment" in distinguishing poetry and verse, but his essay on Kipling shows otherwise. He cannot resist. And if he cannot, it is no surprise that those who have followed him have been even more zealous in

their praise of poetic powers and in their denigrations of measured practices.

Let me take stock of this accidental critical tradition. It distinguishes poetry and verse finally for the sake of opposing them. It begins in an effort to define poetry but it ends only by judging its moral value. It begins by trying to describe different ways of writing and speaking and ends with everyone talking past one another.

Cunningham, whom I mentioned above, sought to curtail such jabbering by reducing poetry to meter. In his most important critical volume, he concluded that "Poetry is what looks like poetry, what sounds like poetry. It is metrical composition."[29] Poetry is verse, verse is poetry, and that is that. By his own admission, there is much that poetry may do besides constitute a metrical composition, but this and this alone is poetry's definition.

Well, with the mis-readers of Aristotle, I believe there is a distinction between poetry and verse. And yet, with Cunningham, I believe that verse is so essential to poetry as to be nearly identical with it. Do I contradict myself? We shall see. My intention is to solve this problem by engaging in just that mode of inquiry that Aristotle himself practiced, and which is now called that of "tradition dependent rationality." With Aristotle, we turn to the cumulative historical experience of a tradition in order to arrive at a rational account of something that finally transcends the tradition.[30]

Consider a very different starting point for the definition of poetry. Not in the words of Aristotle, but of Plato. Here are some words of the priestess Diotima found in *Plato's Symposium*:

> Well, you know for example, that "poetry" (*poiesis*) has a very wide range. After all, everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry, and so all the creations of every craft and profession are themselves a kind of poetry, and everyone who practices a craft is a poet . . . Nevertheless . . . As you also know, these craftsmen are not called poets. We have other words for them, and out of the whole of poetry we have marked off one part, the part the Muses give us with melody and rhythm, and we refer to this by the word that means the whole. For this alone is called "poetry," and those who practice this part of poetry are called poets.[31]

Diotima tells Socrates that every act of making is poetry, because the word poetry simply means making.[32] But the kind of making for which we normally reserve that word is that part "the Muses give us with melody and rhythm." This passage, coupled with much of what we know about the long history of poetic practice in the ancient and modern worlds, allows us to make two observations.

First, what Diotima indicates here is that the art of poetry is the *paradigmatic* art form. By this I mean, it is the *prototype* of all making: it comes first, because it comes from the Muses, from beyond this world, as it were, and so before we begin making other things on our own. It is also the *archetype* of all making. Every other kind of making is understood or defined by way of analogy to the art of poetry. There will, consequently, be many things that resemble poetry in some respects and not in others. They will be more poetic the more closely they approximate to it, the more fully they *participate* in its essence; but each of these things may be called poetry by *way of analogy*. I'll return to this.

The second conclusion will more immediately speak to our subject. What is this special part of making in itself? It is *making*, first of all, yes, but it is a kind of making given by the muses. What do the muses give? Well, whether we look with care specifically at Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient sources, or take a wider view of the whole historical practice of poetry, we shall see that all poems partake of three other elements given to them—which, please note, conveniently start with the letter "m" as well. Those three elements the muses, in one way or another and in various proportions, give to our paradigmatic act of making are *memory*, *metaphor*, and *meter*. Let me define them.

Under *memory* we comprehend several aspects of poetry. In calling poetry a gift of the muses, Plato reminds us that the muses themselves are all daughters of Mnemosyne.[33] Memory is the mother of the muses. Memory is, first of all, that power which gathers up the minute fragments of the past and forges them into a whole that constitutes a true form, a unity, a story that can be told. It re-collects. Memory is also that power which can hear such a story piecemeal and perceive it as a true whole. It is, furthermore, the faculty that allows a story to be retained, to be passed from person to person and generation to generation. We see that Aristotle's talk of poetry as *mimesis*, as imitation of an action, is really just a particularly important sub-category of memory. We require poetry if we are to live out our own lives—

of action—as social and historical creatures with a shared past and culture.

Under *metaphor* we comprehend all those uses of language rooted in analogy that allow one thing to stand in for and to reveal another, including both the trope, where a vehicle signifies a tenor, or the scheme, where an ordering of language causes that language to reveal by connotations of idea and feeling more than it literally denotes. This element also is given by the muses. Whereas memory seems to gather ingredients from one place before constituting them as a whole in another, it is through metaphor, in this broad sense, where poetic language seems to bring something new and beyond the limits of this world into it, where we may know it. As Plato makes clear in another of his dialogues, the *Phaedrus*, it is through metaphor that poetry can become a revelation of being and truth, the eternal can appear under the sign of the temporal, the ideal incarnate in the particular.

The third element founds, holds together, and fulfills the first two. *Meter* is the very foundation of poetry; because it measures language, it makes it memorable.[35] Verse gives poetry the power to become especially memorable, to be a fit bearer of the gifts of Mnemosyne. The shaping of meter was taken by the Greeks as a sign that it was inspired—a gift.[36] Mundane language is infused and tailored by a divine power to take on a perfected shape that we recognize as heightened and therefore above us; its language has been gathered into a whole that we can see and that holds together under scrutiny. This shaping attribute of meter leads it additionally to take on the offices of metaphor, insofar as the orderliness of the metrical line serves as a microcosm for the general orderliness and intelligibility of the macrocosm, the whole of reality. As an analogical order, meter stands apart from the intelligible, literal sense of the line, and so also hints as the depths of the poem and the depths of reality. Meter deepens the sense of a poem such that we perceive every poem is always more than the sum of its parts; all being is intrinsically self-transcending, and poems reveal this by their form. However much we may think that our knowledge of reality qualifies as a comprehension of it, we will always discover that there is something more, something that exceeds our grasp.

In brief, meter provides a foundation of poetry as the kind of making that holds and perpetuates memory; it shapes the form of memory into a true whole; it orders it in analogical conformity to the total order of things; and it reminds us in its refined perfection that everything we perceive is a vicar of a reality beyond itself,

a revelation of inexhaustible depths. Here is why Cunningham's deflating talk is true but inadequate. Here is also why poetry is distinct from verse and yet inconceivable without it. For everything poetry does in the precincts of memory and metaphor it does with meter as source and fulfillment of them.[37]

Ah, but what of those poems that are unmetered, but still rooted in memory or metaphor? For such things exist. Are they not poems? They are. By analogy. Poetry as memory, metaphor, and meter is the paradigmatic art form. A work of making composed only of memory and metaphor will strike us as "poetic" if not a poem, and it may even be called a true poem insofar as it *participates* to a great degree in that paradigm. Consider the work of Marianne Moore, which is sometimes written in rhymed syllabics and sometimes in free verse. In a late interview with Donald Hall, she called it all poetry *not* because it contained in their fullness all three elements I have defined. Rather her work bore analogical traces of those three elements sufficient that, lacking a better word, it could only be "called poetry because there is no other category to put it."[38] This does not place meter outside the essence of poetry. Rather, we see that every non-metrical poem seeks to remind us of meter by way of analogy, by allusion to poetry's origin in meter. At its most coarse, we see that this is why non-metrical poetry has to be called free verse: not because it is verse, but because it looks over its shoulder to verse in anxious search for its origin in the muses. Poetry is the paradigmatic art form, and verse, meter, is the paradigm of poetry. Centuries of efforts to divide the two have not succeeded, because they cannot. Poetry was, after all, the part of making that the muses gave to us "*with* melody and rhythm." Sidney was more correct than he knew to hold up poetry as the consummate philosophy and the transcendent history. Every poetic tradition the world has known shows us meter as founding and perfecting the elements of memory and metaphor such that the three seem always to want to be *with* one another. When a poem lacks the element of verse it seems nonetheless to call out for it, as Mnemosyne might call after one of her lost children, the muses.

[1] T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, 228.
[2] Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, 230, 251.
[3] Steele dedicates considerable space to Eliot's essay on Kipling, in *Missing Measures*. See, 10, 109-114.
[4] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b.

[5] Timothy Steele, *Missing Measures*, 111.
[6] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448a.
[7] This is just how Aristotle's *Poetics* begins. He discusses the formal "means" that divide the poetic art, but notes that these divisions cannot fully describe what each species of the art does in itself (*Poetics* 1447a-b).
[8] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1408b. Cf. Steele, *Missing Measures*, 119.
[9] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448a.
[10] Gavin Alexander, ed., *Sidney's 'Defense of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, 9-10.
[11] Alexander, 12.
[12] Alexander, 32.
[13] Cf., John Thompson, *The Founding of English Metre*, 139, 156.
[14] Alexander, 32.
[15] Alexander, 16, 18, 35.
[16] Alexander, 16.
[17] Yvor Winters, *Forms of Discovery*, 28.
[18] Winters, 32.
[19] Alexander, 18, 34.
[20] Alexander, 5.
[21] Alexander, xxxii-xxxiv
[22] Alexander, 15.
[23] Steele, 110.
[24] J.V. Cunningham, *Collected Essays*, 134.
[25] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1453a. For a critique of Aristotle's account of the matter of Athenian tragedy, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 131-133.
[26] T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, viii-ix.
[27] Dick Davis, *A Trick of Sunlight*, 36.
[28] See, for instance, Ariel Dawson, "The Yuppie Poet," in *AWP Newsletter* (May 1985), 5-6.
[29] Cunningham, 136.
[30] My account of the definition of poetry is given at greater length in *The Fortunes of Poetry in an Age of Unmaking*. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of the character of "tradition dependent rationality," and Chapter 12 for a fuller description of the essential properties of poetry. For the classic account of Aristotle's practice of rational inquiry, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*?, 124-145.
[31] Plato, *Symposium*, 205c-d.
[32] Alexander, 8.

[33] See Hesiod, *Theogony*, in *The Works and Days/Theogony/The Shield of Herakles* (Trans. Richmond Lattimore). It will be pertinent to what I say about memory to note that Hesiod tells us the muses dwell with Zeus, "singing the race of human kind, / and the powerful Giants" (126). So also, later in the poem, Mnemosyne is called the mother "from whom were born to [Zeus] the Muses / with veils of gold, the Nine / whose pleasure is all delightfulness, / and the sweetness of singing" (178). In brief, memory is the mother of song—measured speech (meter)—that tells us the recollected stories of the past, and tells those stories to Zeus, too, which suggests their significance is more than merely human (see the discussion of metaphor below).

[34] In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates deprecates most poets before proceeding to show what genuinely muse-inspired poetry, given in a "divine madness," can reveal (245a). It can imitate the otherwise inimitable, because "invisible" but intelligible, ideas of the plain of truth (246a-247b).

[35] Verse "far exceedeth prose in the knitting up of the memory," writes Sidney (Alexander, 32).

[36] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1408b. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245a.

[37] What constitutes meter is at least as important a question as whether meter is essential to poetry; it is, in fact, the more obvious and necessary question from which that of "are verse and poetry distinct" can sometimes seem a mere distraction. For a discussion of what "counts" as a metrical form suitable for poetry, see the "Symposium on Form" that comprises the whole of *Think* 3.4 (Spring 2011). For a specific solution to the question, see David J. Rothman's "Lisping in Numbers" (3-5), and my response, "The Splendor of Form" (21-28). A revised form of my response appears as an essay in *Dappled Things* 8.1 (Candlemas 2013): 43-55 and in *Classis* 23.1 (March 2016): 4-10.

[38] Donald Hall interview with Marianne Moore, *The Paris Review* 26 (Summer-Fall 1961).